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MEMO FOR D/DI

1. Following up on our phone conversation this morning, I am convinced that we can capitalize on Khrushchev's fondness for competition (as suggested in the NYT editorial attached).

2. Such straws in the wind as Khrushchev's repeated stress on catching up with the US in meat, potatoes, etc. and Dan Schorr's Moscow broadcast this morning (saying Soviets cracked back at allegations that their technological triumphs were won at cost of living standards, and were criticizing Mrs. Roosevelt for saying she never saw a well-dressed Russian on her recent trip) indicate how sensitive the Soviets, and Khrushchev in particular, are on this subject.

3. Another pertinent factor is our estimate (in 11-4-57) that the Soviets face a real priorities problem in how to allocate their resources among consumption, investment, and defense. Anything we can do to push them in the direction of more emphasis on consumption would almost certainly be advantageous to our side.

4. Under these circumstances, wouldn't it be useful for us to undertake what would amount to a large-scale PP operation designed to embarrass the Soviets about their low living standards. I realize a good deal of this goes on through VOA, etc. but what I have in mind is elevating it to a higher level via some challenging statements by our top people. The Times suggestion that we counter Khrushchev's challenge to a rocket shooting match by proposing a consumer goods contest as more appropriate to "peaceful co-existence" is a good one. This type of pressure on the Soviets would be difficult to carry out through CIA-type operations alone but we could certainly help push it.

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QUESTION OF KHRUSHCHEV  
Nikita S. Khrushchev was obviously bragging when he gave an interview to The United Press last week. He gloated over Soviet superiority in rockets and missiles. He seemed to relish talking about the likelihood that a future world war would turn Europe into a "cemetery," forgetting apparently that Communist Eastern Europe and his own country would be part of that "cemetery." He enjoyed warning us that in such a war our own land would become a battlefield, and reiterated his conviction that the war would be won by communism. One wonders whether Soviet scientists have told him about the political blindness of Strontium 90, and its impartial propensity for damaging the bodies of Communists and capitalists alike.

So great was Mr. Khrushchev's exuberance that he challenged this country to a rocket "shooting match" to prove Soviet rocket superiority. Fortunately there is no need for such a match. Defense Secretary McElroy has wisely conceded present Soviet superiority in rockets and missiles, and this nation appears to be at least beginning the task of wiping out that superiority.

Mr. Khrushchev is presumably now busy conferring with the Communist leaders from many lands who have been in Moscow these past two weeks. We may wonder whether any of these leaders has dared remind him that their propaganda for communism promises people something quite otherwise than simply the speediest known method of bringing death to other human beings. Marx, Engels and Lenin argued for communism as a means of bringing a better life to human beings, not as a means for creating deadlier arms.

May we suggest a more relevant challenge to Mr. Khrushchev than a rocket shooting match. What about a public comparison of the standards of living, leisure and freedom enjoyed by the people of the Soviet Union as against those of the United States? Who lives better, both materially and spiritually, a steelworker in Pittsburgh or his opposite number in Magnitogorsk? Whose personal needs are better satisfied, a clerk behind the counter in one of our large department stores or the clerk behind a counter in Moscow's? Which city's children have the better school facilities, New York's or Moscow's? Where do farmers live better, in Iowa or in Kazakhstan? Where is the quality of medical care better, in Boston or in Leningrad?

So long as Mr. Khrushchev refuses to submit to that kind of comparison we may suspect with more than a little certainty that he knows he would be on the losing side. But aren't these comparisons the only relevant ones when we ask which is the best way of life for human beings?